

THE GUARDIAN

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www.madera-county.com Go to "Select a Department" then scroll down to "Veterans"
At Veteran Resources find back copies

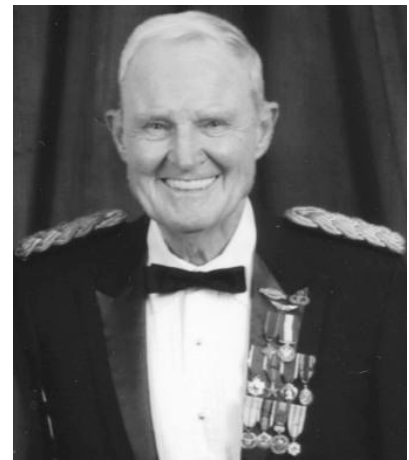
NATIONAL FREEDOM AWARD

On December 1, 2007, Operation Gratitude will present the first annual **NATIONAL FREEDOM AWARD** as a tribute to American troops around the world who have freely sacrificed their own comfort and safety in order to serve our nation. The organization has chosen a true hero, retired United States Army **Lieutenant General Hal Moore, to be the award's inaugural recipient.** General Moore's renowned career has been celebrated by many within the military community. Both on and off the battlefield, he has been an advocate and friend to American troops.

General Moore coauthored the New York Times #1 bestseller ***We Were Soldiers Once...And Young***, the stirring, visceral account of his experience as a battalion commander in Vietnam. The book's major motion picture adaptation, *We Were Soldiers*, hailed by many as "one of the best war movies ever made," has made him a household name. General Moore will share the honor of this award with some special friends—cast members from the movie who will join him for a private reunion in Los Angeles and then attend the public ceremony at 12 Noon on December 1.

"We are honored to present our first **NATIONAL FREEDOM AWARD** to Lt. General Hal Moore. Through his selfless service to Country, his commitment to his faith, and his dedication to his soldiers, Lt. General Moore exemplifies American courage and resolve in pursuit of the cause of freedom and thereby inspires and encourages others to serve our Nation," says Operation Gratitude founder Carolyn Blashek. "We are humbled by, and deeply appreciative of, Lt. General Moore's embrace and support of Operation Gratitude."

Though Moore's impressive list of decorations includes citations like the Distinguished Service Cross, receiving the **NATIONAL FREEDOM AWARD** is a unique honor. "Every day countless troops willingly place themselves in harm's way to serve and defend our country. One of the lessons of Vietnam was that our soldiers need to know they are not forgotten back home—particularly when they are fighting a war that has become politically unpopular," Moore states. "Operation Gratitude's mission represents the *best of America*, the spirit that makes America worth defending. Accepting this award is my great privilege."



Veterans Service Office

Madera Veterans Office
321 W. Yosemite Ave.
Madera Ca 93637
Suite 101

Hours

Mon., Through Fri. 8-5
Dennis Blessing, Service Officer
(559) 675-7766

Madera Transportation
(888) 826-2838 ext 6424
(888) 826-2838 EX 5642
from Merced (72 Hr. Notice)
Madera pick up-Perkos
Oakhurst (559) 658-5399



PURPLE HEART PRESENTATION - Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates presents the Purple Heart to Army Staff Sgt. Joseph Dewolf during a 1st Cavalry Division Purple Heart and volunteer recognition ceremony at Fort Hood, Texas, Nov. 27, 2007. Defense Dept. photo by Cherie A.



PURPLE HEART - Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates presents the Purple Heart to Army Spec. Jaime Antolec during a 1st Cavalry Division Purple Heart and volunteer recognition ceremony at Fort Hood, Texas, Nov. 27, 2007. Defense Dept. photo by Cherie A. Thurlby

The Guardian is published monthly by Dennis Blessing, Service Officer of the Madera County Veterans Service Office. It is freely issued, via email, to all Madera Veterans and Service Organizations.

The primary purpose of this publication is to provide County Veterans with a timely news source; effectively informing Veterans of VA up-dates and other pertinent information. Hopefully, it will also serve as an inter-group vehicle, announcing important activities and information offered by other local Veterans service organizations.

Your comments and suggestions are always welcomed.

Dennis Blessing, Publisher

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Submissions for publication are encouraged from any interested person. Contributions should be in a "Word" format with any pictures attached. Any opinions expressed are those of the contributing writer and do not necessarily reflect the opinions or policies of the Publisher of "The Guardian" newsletter or the County of Madera. The Publisher reserves the right to edit, amend or reject any contribution submitted for publication.



APACHE LANDING - Soldiers flying Apache helicopters come in for a landing at Camp Taji, Iraq, after completing a reconnaissance mission over Baghdad Nov. 19, 2007. The pilots are from 1st Cavalry Division, 1st Cavalry Brigade, 1st "Attack" Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment. Photo by Chief Warrant Officer 4 Daniel McClinton

USS New York *It was built* *with 24 tons* *of scrap steel* *from the* **World Trade** **C e n t e r .**

It is the fifth in a new class of warship - designed for missions that include special operations against terrorists. It will carry a crew of 360 sailors and 700 combat-ready Marines to be delivered ashore by helicopters and assault craft. Steel from the World Trade Center was melted down in a foundry in Amite, LA to cast the ship's bow section. When it was

poured into the molds on Sept 9, 2003, "those big rough steelworkers treated it with total reverence," recalled Navy Capt. Kevin Wensing, who was there. "It was a spiritual moment for every-



body there."

Junior Chavers, foundry operations manager, said that when the trade center steel first arrived, he touched it with his hand and the "hair on my neck stood up." "It had a big meaning to it for all of us," he said. "They knocked us down. They can't keep us down. We're going to be back."

The ship's motto? **"Never Forget"**



The Need for Veterans Day Observances in School
By Mark Wyland, Senator 38th District
Chairman, Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs
240 Words

Last month we celebrated the courageous and heroic efforts of our men and women in uniform who selflessly defended this country in preservation of its freedoms. Financial institutions, government offices and our schools were closed in memoriam of Veterans Day.

As the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs, I am committed to restoring civic pride in this country and its institutions. I want to see government and history taught to a higher level to ensure that our students are learning the material. Children, and all citizens for that matter, need to know what it means to be an American.

Our schools are entrusted with teaching our children, and on one of the most important days of the year for the history of this country, we choose to close our schools. I believe it would better serve our children if Veterans Day in school be devoted to telling the stories of our men and women in the Armed Forces who have sacrificed their lives for this country. We need to restore pride in American values and its rich military history. We must recognize the importance of our fallen heroes and those who remain to tell their stories. We are forever indebted to those men and women of the United States who have sacrificed their lives to preserve the freedoms that all Americans enjoy today.

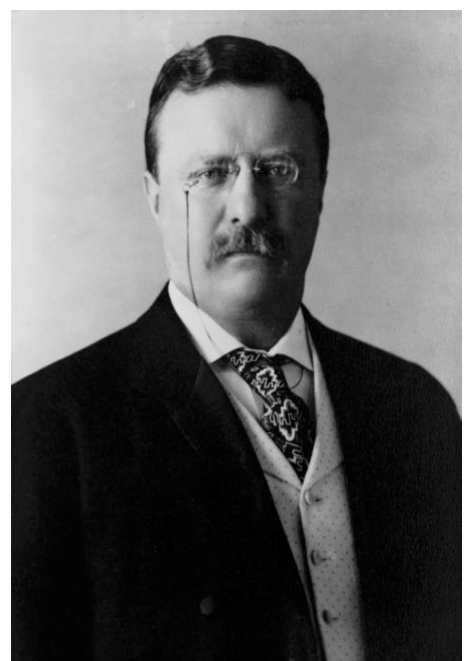
God Bless You and Have a Merry Christmas and a Healthy and Prosperous New Year!

Senator Mark Wyland represents the people of the 38th Senate District, which includes the north San Diego County cities and communities of Bonsall, Camp Pendleton, Carlsbad, Encinitas, Escondido, Fairbanks Ranch, Hidden Meadows, Lake San Marcos, Oceanside, Rancho Santa Fe, San Marcos, Solana Beach and Vista. He also represents the south Orange County cities of San Clemente and

Theodore Roosevelt's ideas on Immigrants and being an AMERICAN in

"In the first place, we should insist that if the immigrant who comes here in good faith becomes an American and assimilates himself to us, he shall be treated on an exact equality with everyone else, for it is an outrage to discriminate against any such man because of creed, or birthplace, or origin. But this is predicated upon the person's becoming in every facet an American, and nothing but an American... There can be no divided allegiance here. Any man who says he is an American, but something else also, isn't an American at all. We have room for but one flag, the American flag... We have room for but one language, and that is the English language... and we have room for but one sole loyalty and that is a loyalty to the American people."

Theodore Roosevelt 1907



Friday Mornings at the Pentagon



By JOSEPH L. GALLOWAY McClatchy Newspapers

Over the last 12 months, 1,042 soldiers, Marines, sailors and Air Force personnel have given their lives in the terrible duty that is war. Thousands more have come home on stretchers, horribly wounded and facing months or years in military hospitals.

This week, I'm turning my space over to a good friend and former roommate, Army Lt. Col. Robert Bateman, who recently completed a yearlong tour of duty in Iraq and is now back at the Pentagon.

Here's Lt. Col. Bateman's account of a little-known ceremony that fills the halls of the Army corridor of the Pentagon with cheers, applause and many tears every Friday morning. It first appeared on May 17 on the Weblog of media critic and pundit Eric Alterman at the Media Matters for America Website.

"It is 110 yards from the 'E' ring to the 'A' ring of the Pentagon. This section of the Pentagon is newly renovated; the floors shine, the hallway is broad, and the lighting is bright. At this instant the entire length of the corridor is packed with officers, a few sergeants and some civilians, all crammed tightly three and four deep against the walls. There are thousands here.

This hallway, more than any other, is the 'Army' hallway. The G3 offices line one side, G2 the other, G8 is around the corner. All Army. Moderate conversations flow in a low buzz. Friends who may not have seen each other for a few weeks, or a few years, spot each other, cross the way and renew.

Everyone shifts to ensure an open path remains down the center. The air conditioning system was not designed for this press of bodies in this area.

The temperature is rising already. Nobody cares. "10:36 hours: The clapping starts at the E-Ring. That is the outermost of the five rings of the Pentagon and it is closest to the entrance to the building. This clapping is low, sustained, hearty.

It is applause with a deep emotion behind it as it moves forward in a wave down the length of the hallway.

"A steady rolling wave of sound it is, moving at the pace of the soldier in the wheelchair who marks the forward edge with his presence. He is the first. He is missing the greater part of one leg, and some of his wounds are still suppurating. By his age I expect that he is a private, or perhaps a private first class.

"Captains, majors, lieutenant colonels and colonels meet his gaze and nod as they applaud, soldier to soldier. Three years ago when I described one of these events, those lining the hallways were somewhat different. The applause a little wilder, perhaps in private guilt for not having shared in the burden . yet.

"Now almost everyone lining the hallway is, like the man in the wheelchair, also a combat veteran. This steadies the applause, but I think deepens the sentiment. We have all been there now. The soldier's chair is pushed by, I believe, a full colonel." Behind him, and stretching the length from Rings E to A, come more of his peers, each private, corporal, or sergeant assisted as need be by a field grade officer. 11:00 hours: Twenty-four minutes of steady applause. My hands hurt, and I laugh to myself at how stupid that sounds in my own head. My hands hurt. Please! Shut up and clap. For twenty-four minutes, soldier after soldier has come down this hallway - 20, 25, 30. Fifty-three legs come with them, and perhaps only 52 hands or arms, but down this hall came 30 solid hearts.

They pass down this corridor of officers and applause, and then meet for a private lunch, at which they are the guests of honor, hosted by the generals. Some are wheeled along. Some insist upon getting out of their chairs, to march as best they can with their chin held up, down this hallway, through this most unique audience. Some are catching handshakes and smiling like a politician at a Fourth of July parade. More than a couple of them seem amazed and are smiling shyly.

"There are families with them as well: the 18-year-old war-bride pushing her 19-year-old husband's wheelchair and not quite understanding why her husband is so affected by this, the boy she grew up with, now a man, who had never shed a tear is crying; the older immigrant Latino parents who have, perhaps more than their wounded mid-20s son, an appreciation for the emotion given on their son's behalf. No man in that hallway, walking or clapping, is ashamed by the silent tears on more than a few cheeks. An Airborne Ranger wipes his eyes only to better see. A couple of the officers in this crowd have themselves been a part of this parade in the past.

These are our men, broken in body they may be, but they are our brothers, and we welcome them home. This parade has gone on, every single Friday, all year long, for more than four years.

"Did you know that?"

The media hasn't yet told the story. And probably never will.

TRICARE Enrollment, DEERS Updates Available Online

By Tiffany Anderson

Tri- West Healthcare Alliance

Say goodbye to the old eight-page TRICARE Prime enrollment form and hello to paperless enrollment online!

TRICARE's new [Beneficiary Web Enrollment](#) (BWE) site allows TRICARE sponsors to simultaneously enroll in TRICARE Prime and update Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System

Enroll in Prime



Online!

([DEERS](#)) information anytime, from any Internet connection. Eligible retirees re-enrolling in TRICARE Prime can elect to pay the enrollment fee by credit card, bank transfer or have it automatically deducted as an allotment from their Uniformed Services retired pay.

How it Works

To access the new BWE site, beneficiaries will need **one** of the following:

Sponsor's valid Common Access Card (CAC):

www.dmdc.osd.mil/rsl/owa/home

Defense Financial and Accounting Services (DFAS) myPay PIN: <https://mypay.dfas.mil>

Family Member Account:

<https://sso.dmdc.osd.mil/famAcctMgr>

Already Prime? There's still more in store.

The new site is not just for new Prime beneficiaries. Those already enrolled in TRICARE Prime may also:

Transfer enrollment to a new location (portability)

Request a new primary care manager (PCM)

Convert an active duty enrollment to a retiree enrollment up to 90 days before your retirement

View enrollment information

Request a new program enrollment card

Update personal information in DEERS to ensure smooth claims processing

Through www.triwest.com, TRICARE West Region beneficiaries have access to additional features to check claims, authorizations and referrals, eligibility and other health insurance information, as well as a new Life-changing events section to help you keep DEERS information current to ensure seamless TRICARE coverage for your changing family needs. An interactive demo is available to walk visitors through the simple registration process.

Beneficiaries will still have the option to enroll in Prime at the TRICARE office, located in the base hospital or clinic, or through the mail when they submit a DD Form 2876 (*TRICARE Prime Enrollment Application and PCM Change Form*, available on the "Find a Form" page on www.triwest.com) to TriWest and sign and date the completed form in blue or black ink to:

TriWest Healthcare Alliance

P.O. Box 43590

Phoenix, Arizona 85080-3590

Ready, Set, Go!

To log into the Beneficiary Web Enrollment site, go to <https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/appj/bwe/> today. For more information about TriWest's online features, please visit www.triwest.com or call TriWest at 1-888-TRIWEST (874-9378).

Kristen Ward

TriWest Healthcare Alliance
Corporate Communications

FIRST DAY OFF IN IRAQ

Yesterday was my first "day off". I should have stayed in bed.

I woke up went to the Gym, then back to the room to cool down, thought to myself "hey, I need a haircut" so I dug out the clippers from my locker, plugged in the transformer (everything here is wired 220, 50 hz) and immediately threw the breaker, just plugged in the transformer, no load yet, just the transformer. We have one breaker in our trailer for the outlets. It's in someone else's room. That person was out flying.

But that's ok, I can just go to the hangar and use the transformer we have there.

I hop on my bike, (I have a hand me down 18 speed huffy) and ride over to the hangar. Plug in the clippers; they sound a little different, (remember 50 hz?) but I figure, aw heck they are working, I will try them, zip, first pass up the side of my head, no problem. Second pass ziiiiiiiiiiii, ziiiiiiiiiiiiiiii, uh oh.

so I have this new free form hairstyle that just doesn't quite work with the uniform, guess I am going to the barber shop.

Put on my bike helmet, pedal back to the hooch, drop off my clippers then over to the barber shop in our housing unit, we have a shopette, alterations and barber shop in our housing area. They are closed for remodeling today, won't be open for two days.....what next.....

Ok, I still haven't showered, and I was going to go to the main PX anyway so I walk down to the shower, get ready to get undressed....forgot my flip flops (shower shoes)...trudge trudge trudge back to the hooch, Trudge Trudge back to the shower to get my ROOM KEY. Get flip flops and return to the shower. Hop in, no hot water,. Take a VERY quick shower, oh I am awake now.

Get on my bike and pedal my happy self down to the PX, it's about a mile and a half. Park the bike and go in. The line for a haircut is about 6 people deep. 6 people times three Indonesian barbers equals a one hour wait. ok, I am on my day off, no big deal, watch the movie they have playing...

The barber gives me a weird look at my free form hairstyle, I explain it was an industrial accident involving an aircraft propeller. He nods but I don't think he comprehends, but he understands "just give me a high and tight" which he does, pretty good job, ought to be, what would take me 5 minutes to do for myself takes him 30 minutes. Then he looks at me funny when I don't tip him, go figure.

Ok what I needed to get at the PX is a bike lock, so I find what I am looking for, peruse the usual assortment of other stuff in the PX, and go to the checkout stand.

AAFES latest scheme to fleece the servicemen....the Pog. They have these little cardboard disks called Pogs that they give you for change. Not legal tender, just a "gift certificate" for you to redeem on your next visit. Oh as an added bonus they only come in increments of 5 cents, so if you buy something for say \$X.96, you just "downtate" .04 to the AAFES take over the world campaign. If they get even slightly damp they revert to pure wood pulp, hope you check your pockets before you do laundry.

Anyway, I get my \$5 bike lock that because it's Iraq costs me \$9 and head out. Stop at the garbage can do dump the bag and packaging, drop the keys into the garbage can.....spend 10 minutes fishing through the garbage trying to find the keys to my new ^%#\$&^ bike lock, no joy. Ok, I will cut the lock off it and just use the chain with a padlock, that'll work. So I end up paying \$9 for \$2.50 worth of plastic coated chain. I would rather shop at (*&^%(Wal Mart than AAFES.

All week I have been waiting all week for Wednesday night, surf and Turf, T bone steaks, Shrimp and King Crab legs. Last week I got a claw that was as big as a tennis ball, steak was really good too. This has been the culinary focus of my entire week. I skipped lunch for this. I am going to feast tonight. I get to the serving line.....you guessed it, they run out of crab legs 3 people before me. So I take my steak, evidently I got the mortar tenderized version last week because I break the plastic flatware they give us on this week's offering. The shrimp may have been an aquatic animal of some sort at one time but today they are more closely related to the much beloved breakfast food the PAKCAKE. I should have gotten a sandwich.....

That is pretty much a regular day in Iraq. hey, at least I am keeping my sense of humor about it, ha...ha...ha...ha.

CAL-VET HOME LOAN

For military veterans living or buying a home in California, the California Department of Veterans Affairs Home Loan (Cal-Vet) is the best mortgage available on the market today.

Nearly all current and former military personnel either currently residing in California or buying a home in California are eligible to purchase a home with the CalVet Home Loan Program.

Cal Vet allows you to purchase a home in California with as little as \$0 down payment and get one of the best interest rates on the market today. In addition, CalVet offers an affordable and comprehensive insurance program that protects your home from natural disasters such as flood, earthquakes and mudslides with very low monthly premiums and deductibles. Some of the advantages of the Cal Vet loan are:

- Below market interest rates between 5.45 - 6.55% for 30 years keep your monthly payment low
 - Loan amounts up to \$521,250 give you more purchasing power
 - 0% to 3% down payment options allow you to buy a home with little or no cash out of pocket
- Excellent low cost insurance program protects your home from a natural disaster

[Apply Now](#) or Call 1-800-734-3772 and we would be glad to answer any questions you have about this incredible home loan program available to veterans buying in California.

Maximum Loan Limit

Maximum Current Limit updates

- **\$521,250** loan limit on single-family dwellings, condominiums, manufactured homes on land, and co-operative housing.
- **\$125,000** for mobile homes in approved parks.
- **\$521,250** low-cost construction loan.
- **\$150,000** home improvement loan.

FRESNO DISTRICT OFFICE
1752 East Bullard Avenue, Suite 101
Fresno Ca 93710
(559) 440-5132 Local, (866) 653-2511 Toll-Free



**California Department of Veterans Affairs
Capital Development and Construction Division
Report to the California Veterans Board
16 November 2007**

SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS: 16 OCTOBER 2007 - 16 NOVEMBER 2007

VHC- GLAYC

- Construction on schedule
 - West LA: Over excavation of building pads continues. USDVA underground utilities are still being uncovered and are being relocated or re-routed off the State property.
 - Lancaster: Foundation work continues with Area A & B stem wall footings having been placed. Area C footings are scheduled to be poured on 11/21 & Area D footings are scheduled to be poured on 11/30. Underground utility work continues.
 - Ventura: Retaining wall footing complete. Contractor is ready to pour concrete at loading dock area. Contractor installing forms. Masonry Retaining walls will be starting soon.

VHC-REDDING and VHC-FRESNO

- Master Architectural and Design Phase begun
- Design team visit and working meetings in Redding scheduled for Nov. 27-29
- Meeting with DGS Environmental Svcs. Chief, CDVA Construction Dir. and DGS Project Manager and representatives of the City of Fresno to be arranged

VHC-YOUSTVILLE

- Member Services Building Renovation
 - 50% drawings complete
 - DVBE Outreach event held on Nov 16. 8 general contractors and 15 DVBEs in attendance; best turnout to date for a CDVA project
- Water Tank Renovation work begun
- Chiller Replacement Project will remain open through next year's cooling season to guarantee operational stability
- Annex I Renovation remains open to address warranty items regarding carpet squares.

Submitted 16 November 2007
Dr. Robert Johnson
Director, Capital Development and Construction Division

THE GUARDIAN

SERVING MADERA COUNTY VETERANS



News You Can Use

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

VA Regional Office, Oakland

1-800-827-1000

VA Life Insurance Center

1-800-669-8477

VA Medical Center Toll Free (Fresno)

1-888-826-2838

Cal-Vet Home Loan Information, (Fresno)

559-440-5132

Patient Advocate (Fresno VA)**

Ext. 6970

Telephone Advice Nurse (Fresno VA)**

Ext. 6933

Outpatient Clinic – Merced/Atwater (Castle)

209-381-0105

Service Representative: (DAV, Fresno VA)**

Ext. 5642

Service Representative: (VFW, Fresno VA)**

Ext. 5647

Service Representative: (AMVETS, Fresno VA)**

Ext. 5816

Service Representative: (American Legion,
Fresno VA)**

Ext. 5648

**Fresno VA Pharmacy, (to order 14 days before
you run out call by touch tone phone)**

559-225-6100 Ext. 5333

CVSO Madera County (pager) D. Blessing

559-661-6895

Fresno Vet Center (Fresno)

559-487-5660

Transportation to VA Medical appointments

** Call VA Fresno toll free number first

1-888-826-2838 ext. 6424